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HIGHER EDUCATION &
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2020-2030

MISSOURI MIDDLE-SKILL

JOBS REPORT





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MIDDLE-SKILLS OVERVIEW

Middle-skill occupations are an essential part of Missouri's workforce, accounting for four out of every 10 jobs. These are the occupations that require more education and training than a high school diploma but less than a bachelor's degree. Low-skilled jobs are those that require, at most, a high school education, while high-skill jobs require at least a bachelor's degree.

There is always a need for a properly skilled workforce, and a lack of skilled workers impacts the ability of businesses and industry to compete globally. A lack of relevant skills also hinders the average person's ability to be more productive, thus deterring the higher earning potential and improved living standards for such workers. Millions of job postings go unfilled even as millions of people remain unemployed or underemployed. Closing the middle-skills gap can offer a workable solution to this problem.¹

Meeting the continued demand for middle-skill occupations is an important factor in maintaining a strong economy in the state. Middle-skill jobs offer good pay and career opportunities with industry-recognized training and credentials. Such training programs can be as short as a few months. Middle-skill jobs offer an important opportunity for better pay and advancement without needing a bachelor's degree. This report provides an insight into Missouri's middle-skill jobs and provides details on several occupational groups where middle-skilled workers are in high demand.

¹ Joseph Fuller, Dan Restuccia, Jennifer Burrowes, Alexis Young, *Bridge the Gap: Rebuilding America's Middle Skills*, US Competitiveness Project: Harvard Business School, 2015, accessed August 2023.

MIDDLE-SKILL OCCUPATIONS ACCOUNT FOR
FOUR OUT OF EVERY 10 JOBS IN MISSOURI.



MISSOURI'S MIDDLE-SKILL OCCUPATIONS

In 2020, middle-skill occupations had an average annual wage of \$47,836. This was lower than the average annual wage of \$50,140 for all occupations in the state, but higher than the average annual wage of \$30,853 for low-skill occupations.

More than one-third of jobs in Missouri's labor market are middle-skill occupations. In 2020, 37.7 percent of the workforce was employed in middle-skill occupations, compared to 35.7 percent employed in low-skill occupations and 26.6 percent employed in high-skill occupations.

The middle-skill occupation with the highest individual employment is *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers*, followed by *Nursing Assistants* and *Maintenance and Repair Workers*. These three occupations combined employed more than 111,000 workers in Missouri in 2020.

Middle-skill occupations are projected to produce over 124,000 annual job openings during the projection period of 2020 to 2030. This represents 35.4 percent of all job openings during the period. High-skill occupations are projected to produce 19.6 percent of all job openings, and low-skill occupations are projected to produce 45 percent of all job openings.

Total job openings are a combination of growth, exit, and transfer openings:

- Growth openings are the result of an occupation growing between the base year and the projected year.
- Exit openings occur when a worker leaves the workforce entirely, such as retirement.
- Transfer openings occur when a worker leaves their occupation for a different one.

Four occupation groups have particularly high concentrations of middle-skill employment:

- *Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations*
- *Production Occupations*
- *Construction and Extraction Occupations*
- *Protective Service Occupations*

MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS



1,109,691
EMPLOYMENT



124,686
ANNUAL JOB
OPENINGS



\$47,836
AVERAGE WAGE

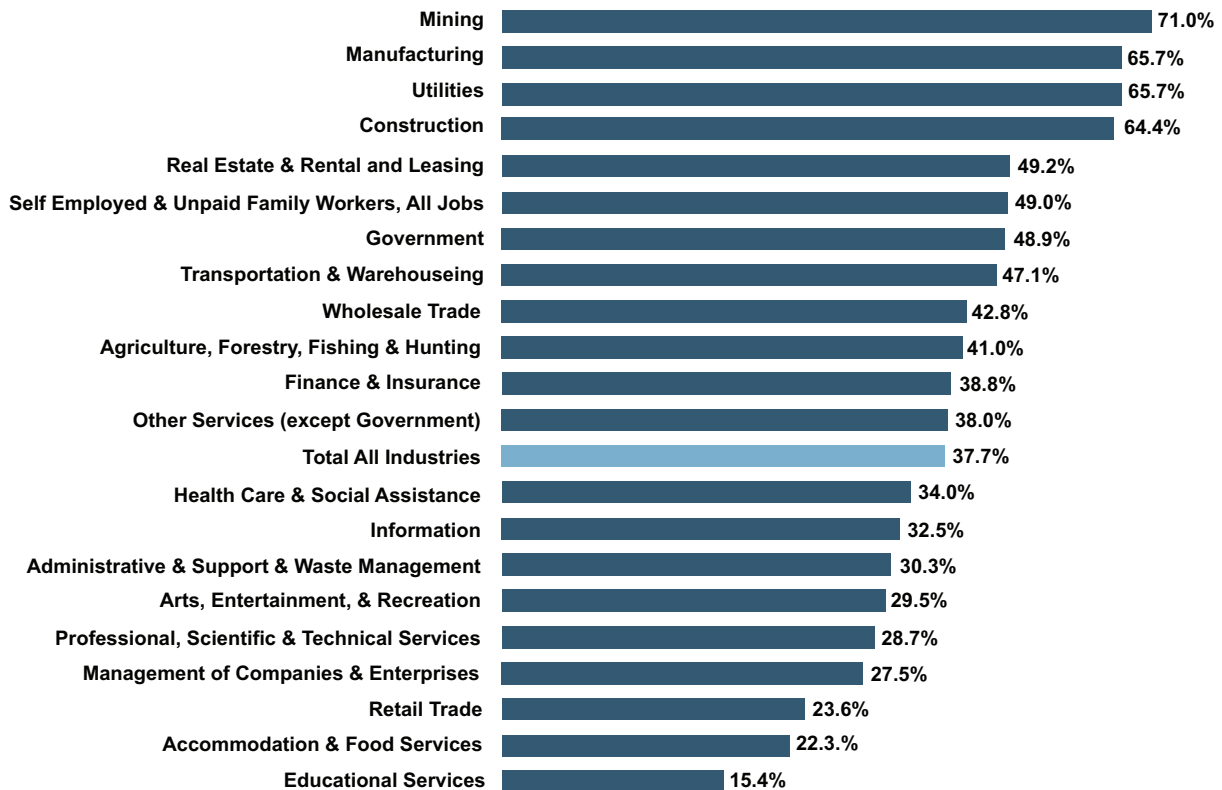


37.7%
OF MISSOURI JOBS
ARE MIDDLE-SKILL

MISSOURI'S MIDDLE-SKILL OCCUPATIONS BY INDUSTRY

Overall, middle-skill occupations make up 37.7 percent of total employment in Missouri. Some industries, however, have a much higher percentage of middle-skill employment. The *Mining* industry has the highest percentage of middle-skill employment, followed by the *Manufacturing* and *Utilities* industries.

Middle-Skill Employment Percent of Industry 2020



TOTAL MIDDLE-SKILL EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY



174,980

MANUFACTURING



152,595

HEALTH CARE



101,139

GOVERNMENT



81,346

CONSTRUCTION

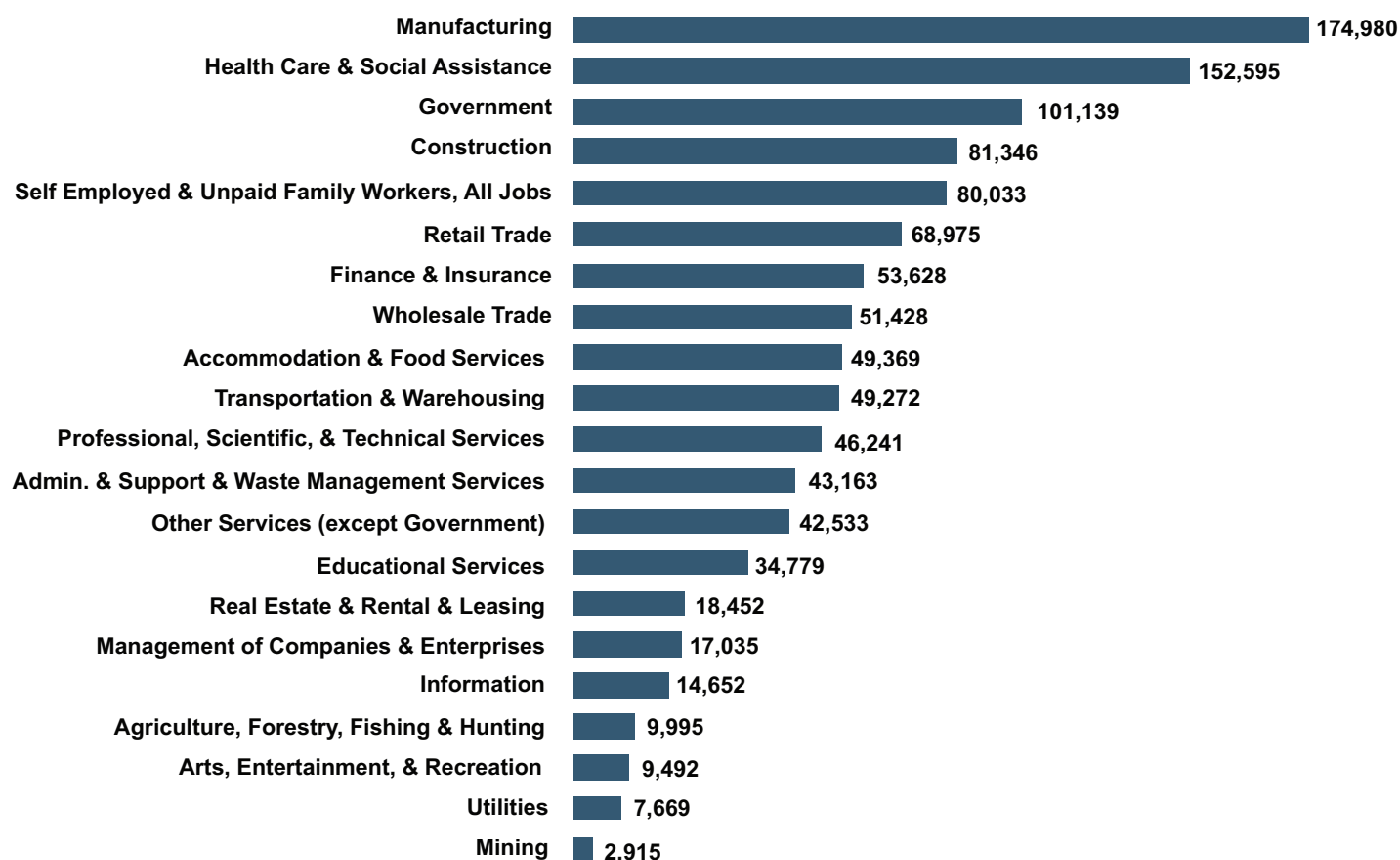


78,519

SELF EMPLOYED

The *Manufacturing* industry has the highest total number of middle-skill employees, followed by the *Health Care and Social Assistance* sector. *Mining* has the highest percentage of middle skill employment, but the smallest middle-skill employment in absolute numbers.

Top Middle-Skill Employment by Industry 2020



TOP MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS BY OPENINGS, GROWTH, & WAGES

The middle-skill occupations with the most total job openings during the projection period are *Restaurant Cooks*, *Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers*, and *Nursing Assistants*. These three occupations combined are projected to have over 16,000 job openings per year through 2030. *Restaurant Cooks* are also projected to have the highest growth between 2020 and 2030.

Top Middle-Skill Occupations by Annual Openings 2020-2030

Occupations	2020 Estimated Employment	2030 Projected Employment	Net Change	Annual Total Openings	2020 Mean Wages
Cooks, Restaurant	28,582	42,335	13,753	6,497	\$27,250
Heavy & Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	46,029	50,281	4,252	5,662	\$48,230
Nursing Assistants	35,052	36,458	1,406	4,454	\$27,720
Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	30,735	33,049	2,314	3,216	\$41,940
Supervisors of Food Preparation & Serving Workers	17,459	21,110	3,651	3,190	\$36,410
Miscellaneous Assemblers & Fabricators	27,643	27,713	70	3,038	\$39,360
Bookkeeping, Accounting, & Auditing Clerks	27,113	26,585	-528	2,891	\$41,320
Sales Representatives, Wholesale & Manufacturing	22,061	23,949	1,888	2,423	\$71,670
First-Line Supervisors of Retail Sales Workers	25,066	23,585	-1,481	2,397	\$43,960
Supervisors of Office & Administrative Support Workers	23,591	23,298	-293	2,274	\$62,020

The middle-skill occupations that are projected to experience the fastest rates of growth are *Restaurant Cooks*, *Actors*, and *Concierges*. These three occupations are projected to grow by more than 40 percent, compared to a 7.3 percent growth rate for all occupations in Missouri. *Restaurant Cooks* also has the highest employment of the top 10 fastest growing occupations.

Middle-Skill Fastest Growing Occupations 2020-2030

Occupations	2020 Estimated Employment	2030 Projected Employment	Net Change	Percent Change	2020 Mean Wages
Cook, Restaurant	28,582	42,335	13,753	48.1%	\$27,250
Actors	290	428	138	47.6%	N/A
Concierges	449	636	187	41.6%	\$30,440
Athletes & Sports Competitors	223	310	87	39.0%	N/A
Umpires, Referees, & Other Sports Officials	1,177	1,553	376	31.9%	\$34,000
Occupational Therapy Assistants	928	1,216	288	31.0%	\$57,100
Physical Therapist Assistants	2,435	3,160	725	29.8%	\$52,320
Fitness Trainers & Aerobics Instructors	4,445	5,678	1,233	27.7%	\$35,730
Computer Numerically Controlled Tool Programmers	527	672	145	27.5%	\$64,540
Mechanical Door Repairers	509	642	133	26.1%	\$53,080

Occupations with projected employment less than 200 are omitted

While the average annual wage for all middle-skill occupations is \$47,836, some middle-skill occupations earn considerably more. The middle-skill occupation with the highest average annual wage is *Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers*, followed by *Commercial Pilots* and *First-Line Supervisors of Police and Detectives*. Although these occupations have higher than average wages, they do not make up a large portion of Missouri's total or projected employment.

Top Middle-Skill Occupations by Average Wage

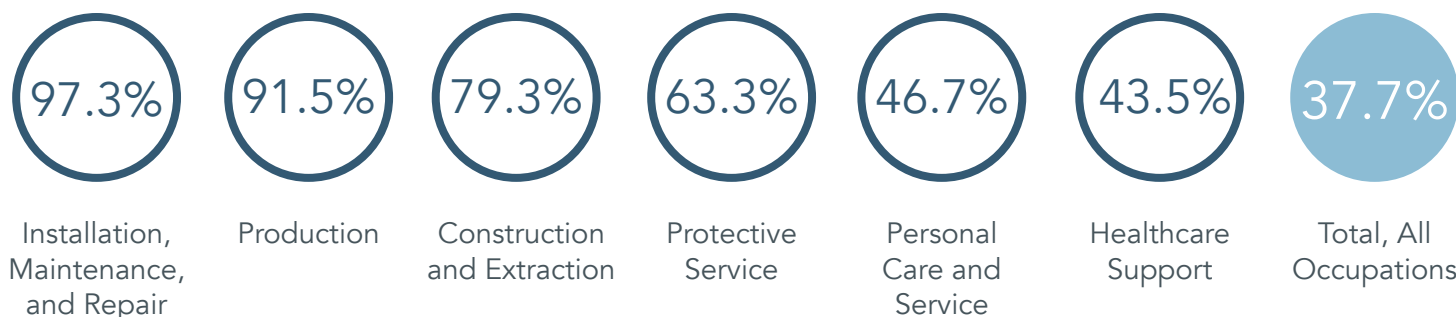
Occupations	2018 Estimated Employment	2028 Projected Employment	Annual Openings		2018 Average Wage
			Growth	Total	
Transportation, Storage, & Distribution Managers	2,034	2,280	246	185	\$100,620
Commercial Pilots	637	706	69	79	\$97,270
First-Line Supervisors of Police & Detectives	2,248	2,319	71	152	\$87,130
First-Line Supervisors of Non-Retail Sales Workers	7,079	6,781	-298	583	\$82,880
Electrical Power-Line Installers & Repairers	3,235	3,473	238	313	\$77,500
Locomotive Engineers	1,280	1,349	69	121	\$77,120
First-Line Sup. of Const. Trades & Extraction Workers	9,997	11,000	1,003	1,077	\$76,480
Claims Adjusters, Examiners, & Investigators	7,292	7,206	-86	539	\$74,660
Diagnostic Medical Sonographers	1,665	1,903	238	150	\$74,270
Detectives & Criminal Investigators	1,928	1,972	44	144	\$73,870

Occupations with Projected Annual Openings less than 50 omitted

MIDDLE-SKILL EMPLOYMENT BY MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUP

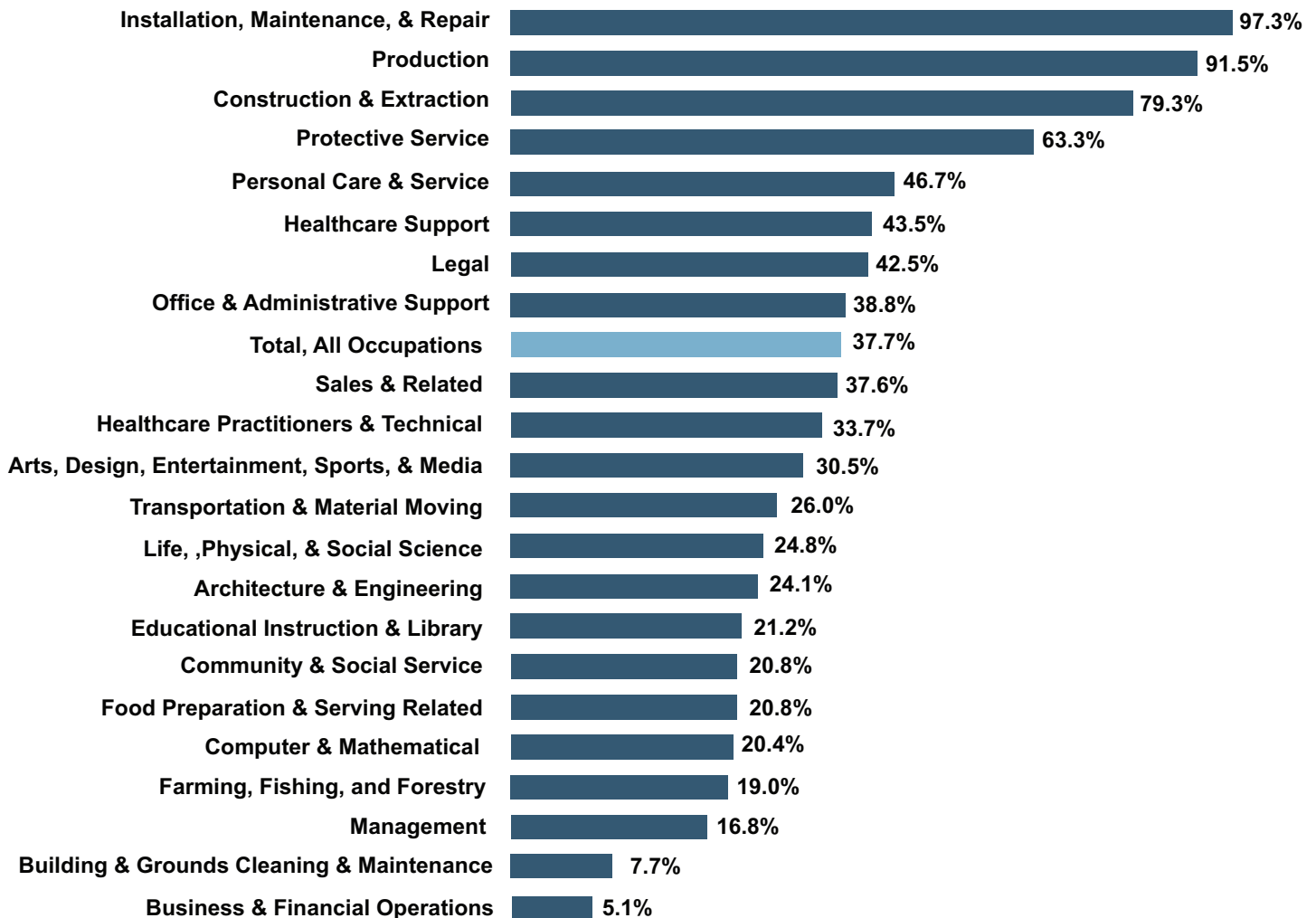
Occupations can be clustered into 22 major groups. While all major occupation groups have middle-skill jobs, some have higher percentages of middle-skill employment than others. The *Installation, Maintenance and Repair* occupation group has the highest percentage of middle-skill employment, followed by *Production*.

Occupation Groups With Above Average Percent of Middle-Skill Jobs



Eight major occupation groups have higher middle-skill employment percentages than the state average of 37.7 percent for all occupations. Some occupation groups with above average middle-skill employment percentages, such as *Healthcare Support* and *Production*, are heavily concentrated in certain industries, such as the *Health Care and Social Assistance* industry and *Manufacturing* industry, respectively. However, there are exceptions. For example, *Installation, Maintenance, and Repair* and *Office and Administrative Support* occupations are more evenly distributed among a variety of industries.

Middle-Skill Employment by Major Occupation Group 2020



INSTALLATION, MAINTENANCE, AND REPAIR OCCUPATIONS

The *Installation, Maintenance, and Repair* major occupation group has over 97 percent of its employment in middle-skill occupations. The top three occupations with the most projected annual openings in this group are *General Maintenance and Repair Workers*, *Automotive Service Technicians and Mechanics*, and *First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, and Repairers*. These three occupations combined are projected to have over 5,700 total job openings each year through 2030.

Top Middle-Skill Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations by Total Openings

Occupations	2020 Estimated Employment	2030 Projected Employment	Annual Openings		2020 Mean Wage
			Growth	Total	
Maintenance & Repair Workers, General	30,735	33,049	231	3,216	\$41,940
Automotive Service Technicians & Mechanics	17,138	17,315	18	1,699	\$44,010
First-Line Supervisors of Mechanics, Installers, & Repairers	8,161	8,738	58	806	\$65,980
Heating, AC, & Refrigeration Mechanics & Installers	6,160	6,850	69	680	\$48,390
Bus and Truck Mechanics & Diesel Engine Specialists	6,256	6,775	52	643	\$49,140
Industrial Machinery Mechanics	5,459	6,693	123	638	\$55,480
Mobile Heavy Equipment Mechanics, Except Engines	4,643	4,350	71	460	\$54,080
Automotive Body & Related Repairers	3,831	4,095	26	388	\$47,910
Telecommunications Equipment Installers & Repairers	3,610	3,516	-9	388	\$58,320
Telecommunications Line Installers & Repairers	2,516	3,492	-2	372	\$59,550

Installation, Maintenance and Repair occupations are found in many industries, with 12.8 percent of employment being found in the *Retail Trade* industry. The relatively even distribution of employment across industries of this major occupational group shows that *Installation, Maintenance, and Repair* occupations are in demand in a wide range of organizations.

Skill requirements for occupations can be divided into *common skills* and *specialized skills*. Common skills are applicable across many different industries and occupations and are also known as “soft” skills. The top common skills for *Installation, Maintenance and Repair occupations* include *Communications* and *Customer Service*. Specialized skills are more specific to an occupation and are also known as “technical” or “hard” skills. The top specialized skills for *Installation, Maintenance and Repair occupations* include *HVAC* and *Plumbing*.

Certifications can be useful when pursuing an *Installation, Maintenance and Repair* occupation. Some certifications, such as an *Automotive Service Excellence Certification*, are more specialized to a narrow range of jobs, while other certifications, such as a *commercial driver’s license*, are generally applicable to a variety of jobs.

Top Skills

Top Common Skills

Communications
Customer Service
Troubleshooting
Management
Operations

Top Specialized Skills

HVAC
Plumbing
Preventative Maintenance
Hand Tools
Painting

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Top Certifications

Valid Driver’s License
Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) Certification
Commercial Driver’s License (CDL)
HVAC Certification
CDL Class A License

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MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUP

PRODUCTION OCCUPATIONS

Over nine out of 10 *Production* jobs are middle-skilled. The top three middle-skill *Production* occupations with the most projected annual openings are *Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators*, *First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers*, and *Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers*. These three occupations combined are projected to have more than 5,750 total openings in Missouri each year through 2030.

Top Middle-Skill Production Occupations by Total Openings

Occupations	2020 Estimated Employment	2030 Projected Employment	Annual Openings		2020 Mean Wages
			Growth	Total	
Miscellaneous Assemblers & Fabricators	27,643	27,713	7	3,038	\$39,360
First-Line Supervisors of Production & Operating Workers	13,256	14,114	86	1,418	\$61,220
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, & Brazers	10,822	12,010	119	1,319	\$43,650
Packaging & Filling Machine Operators & Tenders	11,016	11,698	68	1,290	\$39,870
Inspectors, Testers, Sorters, Samplers, & Weighers	10,602	9,778	-82	1,119	\$47,030
Electrical, Electronic, & Electromechanical Assemblers	7,567	8,494	93	930	\$35,370
Food Batchmakers	5,790	6,146	36	758	\$36,970
Machinists	5,481	6,131	65	654	\$49,910
Bakers	4,279	4,675	40	624	\$29,940
Production Workers, All Other	3,714	4,226	51	480	\$38,510

The *Production* occupation group is closely linked to the *Manufacturing* industry. This is evidenced by the fact that almost three quarters of *Production* jobs are found in the *Manufacturing* industry.

Skill requirements for occupations can be divided into *common skills* and *specialized skills*. Common skills are applicable across many different industries and occupations and are also known as “soft” skills. The top common skills for *Production* occupations include *Communications* and *Operations*. Specialized skills are more specific to an occupation and are also known as “technical” or “hard” skills. The top specialized skills for *Production* occupations include *Machinery* and *Machine Operation*.

Some of the top qualifications in the *Production* occupation group are specific to certain occupations, such as *welding certifications*, while others are more applicable to a variety of occupations, such as *OSHA General Industry Cards*.

Top Skills

Top Common Skills

Communications

Operations

Management

Detail Oriented

Lifting Ability

Top Specialized Skills

Machinery

Machine Operation

Hand Tools

Warehousing

Food Safety & Sanitation

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Top Certifications

3G Welding Certification

4G Welding Certification

10-Hour OSHA General Industry Card

30-Hour OSHA General Industry Card

Airframe & Powerplant (A&P) Certificate

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MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUP

CONSTRUCTION & EXTRACTION

Almost four out of five *Construction* and *Extraction* jobs are middle-skilled. The top three middle-skill *Construction* and *Extraction* occupations with the most projected annual openings are *Carpenters*, *Electricians*, and *First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers*. These three occupations combined are projected to have over 4,700 annual job openings through 2030.

Middle-Skill Top Construction and Extraction Occupations by Annual Openings

Occupations	2020 Estimated Employment	2030 Projected Employment	Annual Openings		2020 Mean Wages
			Growth	Total	
Carpenters	20,560	21,657	110	2,043	\$60,100
Electricians	12,829	14,978	215	1,640	\$61,490
First-Line Sup. of Const. Trades & Extraction Workers	9,997	11,000	100	1,077	\$76,480
Plumbers, Pipefitters, & Steamfitters	8,411	9,448	104	1,006	\$64,910
Operating Engineers & Other Const. Equip. Operators	7,816	8,524	71	924	\$57,360
Painters, Construction & Maintenance	6,435	6,911	48	620	\$55,010
Highway Maintenance Workers	5,496	5,678	18	587	\$36,820
Construction & Building Inspectors	3,567	3,718	15	433	\$60,870
Sheet Metal Workers	4,116	4,443	33	426	\$60,810
Cement Masons & Concrete Finishers	4,301	4,443	14	408	\$54,330

Skill requirements for occupations can be divided into *common skills* and *specialized skills*. Common skills are applicable across many different industries and occupations and are also known as “soft” skills. The top common skills for *Construction and Extraction* occupations include *Communications* and *Customer Service*. Specialized skills are more specific to an occupation and are also known as “technical” or “hard” skills. The top specialized skills for *Construction and Extraction* occupations include *Construction*, *Painting*, and *Carpentry*.

Top Skills

Top Common Skills

Communications
Customer Service
Operations
Lifting Ability
Troubleshooting

Top Specialized Skills

Construction
Painting
Carpentry
Hand Tools
Powerj Tool Operations

Top Certifications

Certified Nursing Assistant
Certified Medical Assistant
First Aid CPR AED
Basic Life Saving (BLS)
Basic Cardiac Life Support Certification

Apprenticeship Occupations

Occupation	2020 Mean Wages	Annual Total Openings
Carpenters	\$60,100	2,043
Electricians	\$61,490	1,640
Plumbers, Pipefitters, & Steamfitters	\$64,910	1,006
Sheet Metal Workers	\$60,810	426
Brickmasons & Blockmasons	\$68,100	200
Structural Iron & Steel Workers	\$55,920	132
Insulation Workers, Mechanical	\$54,490	115
Glaziers	\$64,930	115
Millwrights	\$69,730	64
Boilermakers	\$55,720	40
Terrazzo Workers & Finishers	\$72,640	20
Musical Instrument Repairers & Tuners	\$41,610	19
Stonemasons	\$42,210	11

Many occupations that typically require apprenticeship programs are *Construction* occupations. Of the top 10 middle-skill *Construction* occupations with the highest annual openings, four typically require Registered Apprenticeship programs. Apprenticeships offer employees the opportunity to earn money and receive on-the-job training while working toward a nationally recognized credential.

MAJOR OCCUPATION GROUP

PROTECTIVE SERVICE OCCUPATIONS

More than six out of 10 *Protective Service* jobs are middle-skilled. The top three middle-skill *Protective Service* occupations with the most projected annual openings are *Police and Sheriff's Patrol Officers*, *Correctional Officers and Jailers*, and *Firefighters*. These three occupations combined are projected to have more than 2,200 annual job openings through 2030.

Middle-Skill Top Protective Service Occupations by Annual Openings					
Occupations	2020	2030	Annual Openings		2020
	Estimated Employment	Projected Employment	Growth	Total	Mean Wage
Police & Sheriff's Patrol Officers	14,286	14,829	54	1,157	\$56,480
Correctional Officers & Jailers	7,732	7,069	-66	613	\$33,380
Firefighters	5,901	6,150	25	469	\$51,970
First-Line Supervisors of Police & Detectives	2,248	2,319	7	152	\$87,130
Detectives & Criminal Investigators	1,928	1,972	4	144	\$73,870
Miscellaneous First-Line Supervisors, Protective Service	1,039	1,106	7	109	\$58,280
Workers	1,556	1,624	7	109	\$73,790
First-Line Supervisors of Fire Fighting & Prevention Workers	603	680	8	64	\$50,730
Private Detectives & Investigators	591	568	-2	44	\$50,400
First-Line Supervisors of Correctional Officers	297	293	0	27	\$36,480

Skill requirements for occupations can be divided into *common skills* and *specialized skills*. Common skills are applicable across many different industries and occupations and are also known as “soft” skills. The top common skills for *Protective Service* occupations include *Investigation* and *Operations*. Specialized skills are more specific to an occupation and are also known as “technical” or “hard” skills. The top specialized skills for *Protective Service* occupations include *Law Enforcement* and *Rehabilitation*.

The top qualification for *Protective Service* occupations is a *driver's license*, which is useful for a wide range of jobs. Other qualifications are more specific to certain *Protective Service* occupations, such as a security clearance or a pilot's license.

Top Qualifications
Valid Driver's License
Top Secret-Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI Clearance)
Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Certification
FAA Instrument Rating
Airline Transport Pilot License

Top Skills	
Top Common Skills	Top Specialized Skills
Investigation	Law Enforcement
Operations	Rehabilitation
Communications	Patrolling
Management	All Terrain Vehicles
Tactfulness	Contraband Detection & Control

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MIDDLE-SKILLS CONCLUSION

Middle-skill occupations play a very important role in Missouri's economy and are projected to continue to make up a large portion of the workforce through 2030. Middle-skill jobs that typically require one year or less of training can be good entry points for workers into middle-skill occupations. For jobs that require more training or education, Missouri's community colleges and apprenticeship programs serve a vital role in educating and training the workforce to meet the demands of these occupations.

Another pathway to a middle-skill jobs is through the military. Though not every military occupation translates to a civilian job, many do. Out of 841 civilian occupations, 285 are directly related to an enlisted military occupation. Of those 285 occupations, 174 (61%) are middle-skill, and another 72 (25%) are high-skill occupations. Typically, in order to enter into an enlisted occupation, no experience is required, and the highest education level required is a high school diploma. However, enlisted service members receive technical education and on-the-job training, specific to their particular occupation, from the military. Depending on the service branch and the occupation, this technical training can be combined with voluntary off-duty courses to earn an associate degree.

MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS THAT TYPICALLY REQUIRE ONE YEAR OR LESS OF TRAINING CAN BE GOOD ENTRY POINTS INTO MIDDLE-SKILL OCCUPATIONS.



METHODOLOGY

There is no standard definition of middle-skill occupations. A common description is jobs that are accessible to a person with some training after high school, but require less than a bachelor's degree. The methodology used by the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center (MERIC) combines the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' (BLS) typical requirements for entry into an occupation, with the Employment and Training Administration's O*NET Job Zone classifications, to separate jobs into either low, middle, or high-skill occupations.

BLS primarily assigns occupational skill levels based on typical education, experience, and training requirements. BLS classifies each occupation based on the typical education required to enter an occupation, the work experience in a related job required to enter into an occupation, and the typical on-the-job training required to attain the skills needed in an occupation.

The second source used by MERIC for assigning skill levels is the O*NET Job Zones. The Job Zones indicate the level of vocational preparation needed for a particular occupation. Job Zones are classified on a scale ranging from 1 to 5, with Job Zone 1 needing little or no preparation for entry into an occupation, and Job Zone 5 needing extensive preparation for entry into an occupation.

High-skill occupations are defined as having a typical education of a bachelor's degree or higher. Low-skill occupations must have an education requirement of high school or less; no experience necessary; job training typically less than one-month (short-term); and an O*NET Job Zone of 2 or less.

Once high-skill and low-skill occupations are categorized, all remaining jobs are defined as middle-skill. The majority of middle-skill occupations require on-the-job training of one month or more, including apprenticeships, and have Job Zones of 2 or 3. A Job Zone of 3 indicates that an occupation needs medium preparation. Middle-skill occupations at the higher end of the category require postsecondary education such as an associate degree and/or some work experience in a related occupation.

The same methodology is used by MERIC to define Now, Next, and Later occupations. Now, Next, and Later designations are used to quickly identify the amount of time it would take to acquire the skills and education that would typically be necessary for entry into a particular occupation. Next occupations correspond to middle-skill occupations, while Now and Later occupations correspond to low-skill and high-skill occupations respectively.

MISSOURI MIDDLE-SKILLS REPORT DATA SOURCES

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MERIC in cooperation with Lightcast™.

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